

Physician Reveals First Aid Procedure for Snake Bite

By ROY O. GILBERT, M.D., County Health Officer

then make one-fourth inch cross cut incisions through each fang mark. Suction should then be applied. If no suction apparatus is handy, mouth suction must be used. This is a safe procedure for the person sucking the wound if no abrasion is present in the mouth. The venom may even be swallowed without harm. Suction should be continued for at least 30 minutes, according to the Forest Service, but the Red Cross advises that suction be continued for an hour or more. During relief from suction periods apply ice or cold water, if possible, to the wounds. This gives some relief from pain and may slow absorption of the poison into the system. When swelling spreads to about 3 inches above the bite, move the restricting band above the swelling, make more incisions, and repeat suction. In the event the limb gets cold or numb, the band must be loosened a little. It is generally recommended that the band be removed for one minute at the end of every 15 minute interval to prevent gangrene.

FORTUNATELY, the feelings of fear and dislike that people have about snakes are reciprocal, and, if it is at all possible, snakes will very quickly get away from the presence of human beings. Snake bites occur nearly always when the snake has been surprised or when its warning is disregarded, as is often the case when young children are bitten. If a few precautions are taken, most snake bites can be prevented. In general, stepping, jumping or reaching into areas that cannot be seen clearly should be avoided. Walking near bushes is hazardous, particularly in desert areas, as snakes rest there in order to avoid the heat of the sun.

IT IS MOST important to get the patient to a doctor without delay. Antivenin should be administered quickly. Indeed, to be effective it must be given within an hour or two after the poisonous bite. All stimulating factors should be avoided, including exercise and alcohol. Give plenty of drinking water.

If alone when struck by a snake, apply the restricting band, cut and apply suction. If this procedure is not possible, stroke down towards the fang marks and squeeze out blood and venom. Then walk slowly for help.

A pamphlet on snake bite will be mailed to anyone sending a card of request to the Division of Public Health Education, Los Angeles County Health Department, 241 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles 12.

If snake bite does occur, prompt action must be taken, both in the matter of first aid and in getting the patient to a doctor as rapidly as possible. The speed with which first aid measures are given is most important. In fact, they are useless unless done very soon after the person is bitten. According to the First Aid Guide issued by the U. S. Forest Service and the Red Cross First Aid Manual, emergency treatment for snake bite is pretty much as follows:

THE PATIENT must be kept quiet. A restricting band should be tied around the limb above the fang marks in order to delay the spread of the poison as much as possible. For this purpose a regular tourniquet may be used, but a large handkerchief, soft belt, shoe lace, or similar item will do. Sterilize a knife over a flame,

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